

CLAIMS:

1. A dough handling apparatus comprising a dough cutting apparatus including a plurality of dough cutting members, each dough cutting member being adapted to be brought into contact with a travelling strip of dough for cutting a desired shape out of the strip of dough, each dough cutting member being spaced apart by a predetermined distance from an adjacent cutting member in a plane across the dough cutting apparatus which is transverse to the direction of travel of the strip of dough so that when each cutting member cuts a dough cut-out from the strip of dough, a relatively narrow web of waste dough is produced in the region between adjacent dough cutting members, and a waste dough web removing apparatus for separating the waste dough web from the dough cut-outs, the web removing apparatus including at least one finger for urging the waste dough web upwardly for removal from the dough cut-outs while enabling the dough cut-outs to remain *in situ*.
2. A dough handling apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the dough cutting members are arranged linearly transversely across the dough cutting apparatus so that, in use, a single stroke of the cutting apparatus produces a line of dough cut-outs from the strip of dough with a waste dough web separating adjacent dough cut-outs in the transverse plane.
3. A dough handling apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, in which each cutting member is adapted to make sequential cutting strokes in a travelling longitudinal strip of dough passing beneath the cutting apparatus on a moving conveyor, the cutting strokes being timed and spaced so that the distance between adjacent dough cut-outs in the longitudinal plane which is perpendicular to the transverse plane of the apparatus is zero and the dough cut-outs produced by a given cutting member are arranged in a column parallel to the direction of travel with a longitudinally extending web of waste dough being produced between adjacent columns.
4. A dough handling apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein each dough cutting member is fixedly mounted on a stamping apparatus so that in use, on a downward stroke

of the stamping apparatus, the dough cutting member is brought into contact with the strip of dough, thereby cutting the desired shape in the dough.

- 5 5. A dough handling apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the cutting profile of each dough cutting member is generally oval so that each dough cut-out produced from the dough strip is generally oval in shape.
- 10 6. A dough handling apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the dough cutting apparatus comprises a pre-determined number of dough cutting members so that with a single downward stroke of the dough cutting apparatus, the corresponding number of dough cut-outs are produced.
- 15 7. A dough handling apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein in use, the dough cutting members are brought into contact with the strip of dough which is moving on a conveyor belt underneath the cutting apparatus.
8. (cancelled)
- 20 9. A dough handling apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the at least one finger comprises a sprocket wheel having a plurality of teeth arranged around the rim of said sprocket wheel.
- 25 10. A dough handling apparatus as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the at least one finger also includes at least one roller rotatably connected to the sprocket wheel.
- 30 11. A dough handling apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the web removing apparatus includes a plurality of said fingers arranged at pre-determined separations along the length of a rotatable shaft whereby in use, the dough cut-outs produced by the cutting apparatus pass between adjacent fingers while the waste dough web is urged upwardly.
12. A dough handling apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, wherein the waste dough web is urged upwardly by a rotating conveyor.